

Status of Women

NEWSLETTER

FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

About Naming

This issue was originally to come out in December, as we were discussing the violent event of December 6 1989, an event that shook us more than any other in the last few years. Right now, we feel it is important and quite relevant to talk about violence against women and sexual harassment as not just isolated incidents, but as actions that affect hundreds of women and children in the city every day.

(February 20, 1991)

The horror of this war we (Canadians) are involved in has prompted me to write these few words. This war that has become another manoeuvre by the U.S.A. to not only control an area of the world rich in oil, but also to divert attention from its own critical domestic problems, and prove to the world once more that the games of power have nothing to do with humanitarian reasons. It was "OK" to invade Panama, however the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was "barbaric and inhuman". Both actions were unprovoked and enormously costly in human lives. In this war, obscenely portrayed and censored information trickles down to us civilians from TV's and newspapers. The bombing of Iraq for the last forty days has not produced a lot of information on civilian casualties. Only the "accuracy" of the bombing seems to get acknowledged all the time as we become bombers ourselves looking through the eyes of pilots, as in a cheap horror movie where the audience becomes/sees through the eyes of the aggressor. How can we look through that eye piece (monitor) and not be involved?

(Saturday, February 23, 1991. The ground war has started.)

As an artist and as a member of this committee, I feel it is necessary to name things. Only by naming can a discourse be established, and maybe through that discourse social change could arise. In the context of this war, access to information seems to be the most urgent factor right now. We shouldn't forget, for example, that there are now an estimated 700 nuclear weapons deployed in the region, and that oil in flames, or as is now happening, oil being poured into the waters of the Gulf, could create and is creating horrendous environmental problems. In the case of the burning oil wells, there is a danger of changes to the Asian monsoons. More than 1000 million people who depend on the annual rains for

their crops could face starvation. In naming excess and horror with their proper terms we help in defining not only our feelings, but in taking responsibility for action. Euphemistic discourses abound. Let's not add to the collection of platitudes, manipulation and misinformation the media pours on us daily. The "Gulf War" is not just another special feature made for TV with our stars of the month, but a real confrontation where real people are dying. Canada's involvement in it shouldn't be taken for granted. Furthermore, Canada should not be there in the role of aggressor.

(March 2, 1991)

I wrote these words just a few days ago. Today, 'the war is over' and what better time to reflect even more on what has been going on, particularly in the area of news coverage. Where is Saddam Hussein's "ferocious" army? How come the threat of chemical warfare ended at that? Was there ever any danger of it, or was the USA and its allies once more trying to justify their presence in the region in a display of force never seen since the second WW? Slowly we are starting to see the signs of destruction in Kuwait, a country totally demolished by Iraq, the USA and its allies: a retrieving army decimated, countless, nameless bodies, no running water etc. It will take much longer to see the situation of the Iraqi cities, particularly Baghdad. The casualty count on the Iraqi side is calculated as 100,000 and on the US and the allied side around 150. Death is not countable, but somebody should account for it.

What I'm trying to convey is something about information, about naming and trying to stop deceiving ourselves from a reality we are all a part of. Through this newsletter I would like to contribute to a dialogue about the possibilities of change. I am attempting to write in total awareness of a patriarchal structure that is part of myself, in spite of myself, a structure that needs to be subverted by naming it, to reveal as much of its designs of subjection and deceit. There is so much information that could be shared. Let's keep the dialogue open for action.

Mariela Borello



MTL: December 11, 1989

Miriam Cooley

Nov. 17, 1989

An excerpt from a conversation between Miriam Cooley and Nell Tenhaaf, artist and former co-director of Powerhouse gallery in Montreal.

Miriam.their daughters are still confronted with the same dilemmas.

Nell. You know, this makes me think of teaching. As soon as you say that I think, "Well, I can't just do art work. I have to be in the classroom." Feeling that I can communicate all this complicated...it's so complex...what feminist art undertakes...I stand there and explain Mary Kelly or Mary Scott or whomever, to my students and I think, "Christ, this is so sophisticated! Sophisticated thinking. And nobody is going to grasp that naturally. It has to be taught. It has to be communicated. It has to be disseminated.

M. They need help coming to it.

N. Yeah. So the whole notion of some kind of activism connected to art practice, which I've always been very concerned with. And it's one of the reasons that I held back, for a long time, especially when I was at Powerhouse, feeling almost paralysed in some ways. Like, how can you reconcile all these needs, or agendas? Now I pour a lot of that into teaching...I think that feminist courses are super, super, super vital! And I see how they are put into place, in my experience, and in the art school at the undergraduate and graduate level. They are put into place by women who come in there and realize that this has to happen. And you know, for some reason it's just this year that I am struck overwhelmingly by the need for this! I think that I had been seeing it as very interesting, very positive and very useful etc., and OK, it's good that it's happening. But boy! Suddenly I feel like

I'm on a bit of a crusade for some reason. Maybe it's because of this complexity. Because I see that this could so easily be lost, this whole period. Because it's happened before, many times.

M. Yes, we are always on very soft ground.

(tape ends)

Dec. 11, 1989

This morning I feel that I am on no ground at all. Writing about feminism is difficult. Even typing the word is more significant than it would have been a week ago. It is a struggle to bring heart and mind together while nine white coffins lie in Notre Dame Basilica; while young women and men say prayers for their dead friends. So many sad young faces. I hope that the rituals offer some comfort to the families of the dead women. They offer none to me. I am too full of fear and anger.

An elderly woman, our first woman Governor General, sits in a place of honor. The wife of our Prime Minister, a woman who has always done everything right, is at her husband's side. Ranks of white-clad, gray haired men preside over the rituals as if all that their institution is about had nothing to do with why these young women are dead. Monarchy, government, matrimony, the Church. The hypocrisy is overwhelming. The dark shadow of their power has fallen across aspects of my life and things that I had hoped were pretty well resolved.

In the most immediate and obvious sense it may have been the public manifestations of the advancement of women that provoked an extremely frustrated young man to act so viciously. Women engaged in the pursuit of an education outside traditional spheres were his target. But it would be misleading to say



that his actions were the result of a specific personal experience. The one respect due him is that he can not be made the scapegoat for all the insidious misogyny of our society.

The grim event of December 6th has also caused me to reflect more seriously on my interview with Nell Tenhaaf. Throughout the interview we spoke about feminism in the sense of strengthening the women's voice in the personal, social and political spheres as well as on the artistic level. We talked primarily about her movement towards a personal and artistic voice. Intellectually and emotionally difficult as this may have been at times, there was certainly no fear that this was a life-threatening endeavor. I had the strong impression of an intelligent woman who was challenged by difficulty and complexity. Moreover, there was a determination that her work was a contribution to understanding how all human life could be better.

Today I feel that our positive intentions have been rendered impotent and we are compelled to look more carefully at the reasons for this terrible consequence. It is not just that women want to be in the university, but as Nell Tenhaaf pointed out, women are un-doing the long established meanings of knowledge, (re)situating meanings and (re)inserting women's meanings into the structures of knowledge. This is in fact a truly revolutionary action. It is hard to believe that using our minds is such a threat.

As we talked in November, we were determined to be optimistic and find hopefulness in the contribution that women have made. But in reading through the latter part of our discussion, I am struck by the concern and anxiety underlying the words that were spoken. It is perhaps like sensing that a relationship is in trouble but being unwilling, just yet, to admit to the painful reality. Nell referred to the "threat" posed by intrusive biotechnology and the institutions that exclude women from any form of

control over how those technologies will affect women. She stressed her concern for the harmful consequences of the sexist thinking underlying policies within all our institutions. She commented on a pervasive sexist fear and stereotyping in society. We expressed concern that young women, even those whose mothers are feminists, continue to be confronted by the same problems.

In her work, most particularly in the piece "Species Life" that was then in a show at Powerhouse, Nell posed a question that now has incredible urgency. Her intention was to push the argument back to the fundamental coding of human life, right back to DNA, as a point of departure from which to consider where the roots of the male/female split really lie. The question was posed as an absurdity and we both denied that the problem was that deep. We both were committed to teaching as a means of helping young women enact the changes that we saw to be so important. Were we wrong? Have we set up our daughters to be targets of male omnipotence that is too deep-rooted to be touched by education?

I have no image in mind of the scene of the deaths. The only such photo that has been published was a cloudy and distant image of a young woman fallen back over a table; an appalling glimpse that evoked my sympathy for those who were forced or obliged to bear witness to the reality. The overwhelming image in my mind is of four other young students dead on the pavement at Kent State University eighteen years ago. Several years after that event, American activist Jerry Rubens pointed to those deaths as the end of any hope that the Student Movement could change anything in America. The "military/industrial complex" demonstrated that it would indeed kill its own children if need be. The parallels with this week's tragedy in Montreal force themselves into my mind. After all, the perpetrators of oppression haven't changed.



COMING SOON...

Photography Panel

*Raymonde April
Lynne Cohen
Nina Levitt
Beth Seaton
Cheryl Simon*

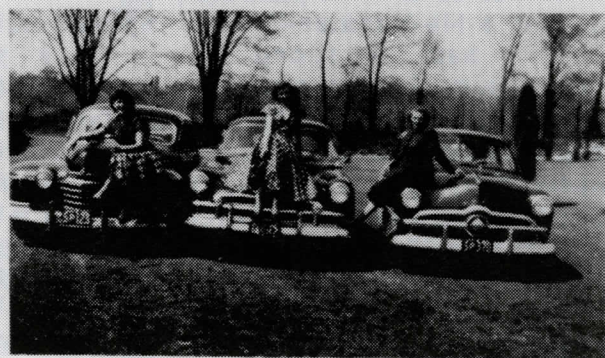
**March 22, at 1:30 pm.
Bourget Building, rm 108
1230 de la Montagne**

organized by
Penny Cousineau and
Cheryl Simon

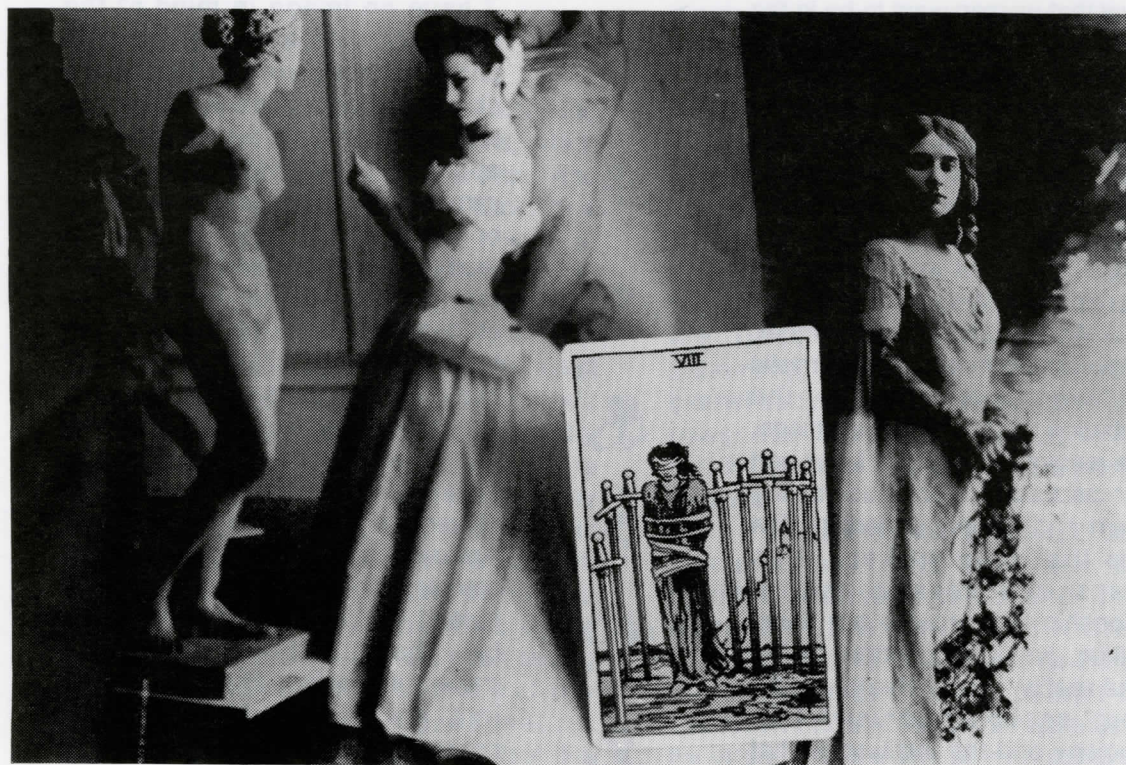
with the assistance
of the Permanent Review
Committee for the
Status of Women
at the Faculty of Fine Arts
Concordia University
and the Canada Council



ences are culturally imposed. Boys are taught to be tough and kick balls about. Girls are given dolls for Christmas.



Nancy Frohlick



L'OUVERTURE D'ESPRIT AUX BEAUX ARTS, THEORIE OU PRACTIQUE?

Johanne Biffi

Dans une faculté de Beaux Arts, y a-t-il de l'harcèlement sexuel? Parmi les clichés attachés au mode de vie de "l'artiste", il y aurait celui de l'ouverture d'esprit, celui du non-conventionalisme ou celui de l'anti-conformalisme et encore celui de l'artiste qui brise les frontières, celui du "on s'en fout du qu'en dira-t-on". Avec tout ça, on pourrait croire que tous les tabous entretenus dans la société deviennent dans un milieu concentré d'artistes" des modes de vie à suivre ou que plus simplement, les stéréotypes continuellement réenforcés dans le quotidien soient, ici, questionnés. HA! HA! HA! Et je ne suis pas la seule à rire (jaune). Ne nous faisons pas d'illusions, s'il-vous-plait, si questionnement il y a, il s'arrête souvent au niveau théorique.

Qu'y a-t-il de plus macho qu'un "Artiste" de "génie" pour qui son "Art" passe avant tout, et si épouse, "blonde", amie il a, qui croyez-vous s'occupe ou s'occupera des bébés? (L'Artiste" femme de "génie" elle, a beaucoup plus de mal à trouver un homme, "chum" ou ami qui fera les bébés à sa place, non pas que son orgueil soit moins démesuré que celui du premier.) Mais ce stade est post-scolaire et nos étudiant(e)s ne sont que d'autres stéréotypes en puissance.

En tant qu'une des technicien(ne)s des laboratoires de photographie de cette faculté privilégiée, je peux en voir de toutes les couleurs, n'oublions pas que la photographie est un médium hautement technologique! Chaque année il y a quelques étudiant(e)s qui arrivent fraîchement préparé(e)s à venir en montrer aux autres sur leur science photographique supérieure. Les "autres", ça inclus certainement les étudiant(e)s, certains professeur(e)s, (du moins ils essaient) et peut-être moins les deux hommes matures que sont les deux techniciens qui travaillent avec moi dans les labos. Quand à moi, je me pose parfois des questions. Le hic, c'est que les deux hommes matures en question et moi-même prenons à chacun un tour la garde et n'ains sommes jamais là en même temps.

"Je voudrais voir le technicien" qu'on me demande, "C'est moi" je réponds. "Non, le vrai technicien", qu'on me précise, "j'ai une question technique à poser."!!! Mon nombril est peut-être encore un peu humide mais je peut très certainement répondre à des questions techniques, on ne m'a pas engagée pour mon

sourire! Ce n'est peut-être pas parce que je suis une femme? Bien voyons donc!

Ces jeunes étudiants ont comme milieu photographique les mêmes ressources que moi, de NDG PHOTO aux représentants KODAK et si vous ne portez pas un jeans taché de sélénium, une chemise à carreaux et une moustache (ça aide plus que vous le croyez) (et c'est décidément exclus pour moi), essayez de vous faire servir en premier chez LA PLACE (magasin de photo) ou de vous faire donner des renseignements approfondis par un représentant KODAK! Il ne faut pas en demander trop, quand un étudiant me demande de l'équipement en me qualifiant de "BABE", il apprend peut-être sa leçon rapidement (j'ai le tempérament fragilement sensible sur ces choses là), mais ça ne veut pas dire que son milieu d'influence se résume à la technicienne de photo de la faculté des Beaux Arts de l'Université Concordia.

Donc, si les théories de différenciation de genres sont mises sur la table un peu plus souvent dans notre milieu, il ne faudrait pas croire qu'il n'y a pas un peu d'hypocrisie dans l'adoption de ces idées ni que tous et chacun les triturent suffisamment pour admettre le comportement nécessaire à l'application. Chaque année je rencontre quelques étudiants masculins qui me demande l'air étonné: "mais, tu penses vraiment qu'il y a encore du sexisme?" Et lorsqu'on propose à certains de suivre un cours portant sur ce que la femme en a à dire, combien répondent qu'ils ont d'autres priorités plus prioritaires que de savoir l'avis de la moitié de la planète? Ces cours sont effectivement offerts par la faculté des Beaux Arts mais quel est le pourcentage d'hommes qui y assistent???

On ne me pelotte pas dans les coins, on ne me fait pas de propositions gênantes et se faire sentir potentiellement incapable de comprendre toutes les subtilités de la technologie photographique par certain(e)s n'est peut-être pas de l'harcèlement sexuel mais c'est peut-être ça le drame car à ces moments là, je n'ai aucune ressource juridique pour me défendre.

5



**NOUS N'AVONS
NOUS NE DEVONS
NOUS SOMMES ICI**

**WE ARE NOT
WE CANNOT
WE ARE HERE**

NS PAS PEUR.

S PAS NOUS TAIRE.

CI POUR DE BON.

OT AFRAID.

BE SILENCED.

ERE TO STAY.



By **JENNIFER ROBINSON**
Gazette Ottawa Bureau

OTTAWA — Four years ago Wednesday in a split-level home in the Toronto suburb of Scarborough, a 14-year-old boy armed with a .303-calibre rifle shot both his parents through the head as they slept.

Then he shot his 7-year-old sister in the stomach as she watched morning cartoons on TV. The little girl bled to death in a chair in the living room, clutching her doll.

Katja MacLeod

The Barrel of a Gun

Suzan Murphy

Held under siege
By media's images of violence
We tread in place
Scurry here and there
And think it doesn't matter
But it does.
Daughters, sisters, mothers puppeted on TV screens
To the tune of abuse and display.
We wash clothes, iron and run off to daily routine
The hurt of *it* remains
Yet it is not the topic of the day
Petty gossip, arguments and soap operas
Conquer trendy table talk at break time.
It - the violence, abuse and display equal dollars
And who dare upset the status quo
For now, we know the market rules the day
While human honor is gambled and discarded
But is it really worth the risk?

The heart has broken
Its shattered pieces pick up a gun
And shoot at a world
Of failure to reach out and touch
Frustration results from a lack of Love,
A pain so deep,
Of dishonor that breeds dis-ease
Depression, that grows into anger
Then rage takes the form of a gun
To kill the pain
That plagues
The weakened heart.

Fragments of Anger
Shot into the Air
Polluted with frustration and
Disappointment
Frozen by the Blue Box
That makes us oblivious
To Violence
We stand in terror
As time whirlwinds illusion
Illusion or Reality?
We must step forward
To tell Media
WE are really Human Beings.

T-Shirts

100% Cotton, Large or Extra Large
Imprinted with text/design displayed on pages 6 & 7 (French on front, English on back, or vice versa)

For sale through The Permanent Review Committee on The Status of Women, Faculty of Fine Arts
and The Concordia Women's Centre, 2020 Mackay
(also L'Androgyne Books on St. Laurent)

\$10.00 price includes \$1.00 donation to TAMS (Teenage Mothers Organization at the YWCA)



"Without you

Review - "Without You I'm Nothing"
Sandra Bernhard
Directed by John Boskovich (1990 USA)

I went to see Sandra Bernhard's "Without You I'm Nothing" with no preconceptions. My only knowledge of Bernhard was from an abrasive interview on the The Arsenio Hall Show. I had no idea what to expect, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I was buoyed by the fact that I was watching a mainstream, high-budget film that was a one woman show. I felt drawn into it because I was being addressed by a woman. It was pure entertainment, but left me with much to think about.

In "Without You I'm Nothing", we are presented with a succession of night club acts. Bernhard transforms herself into different women dressed in regalia from the seventies, who do satirical monologues and burst into chart topping songs of the decade. All these characters are introduced as Sandra Bernhard and there is a linear narrative that runs through the various monologues. She is a brilliant chameleon jumping from one cliché to another. She parodies mainstream American culture and the show biz milieu in which it is created.

Bernhard's characters are larger than life; they are caricatures of real performers. Her multi-collage of seventies and eighties show biz personalities are reflections of our North American culture. One woman talks about growing up in a Jewish household and wishing she could be a gentile at Christmas time. She fantasizes about the "perfect" all-American white bread family. Another character is a collector who has just bought a Navaho blanket at an auction of Warhol's belongings following his death. This woman

romanticizes about the wild west and the true America, and she sings a country ballad. Yet another woman discusses her boyfriend trouble and becomes a disco queen who wants to get down and get dirty. Bernhard's characters are so very familiar. We groove when she grooves; we are right there with her. We've been there before, and we are immersed in the culture that she embodies.

At the beginning of the film we see Bernhard sitting in front of a dressing room mirror admiring herself. She allows the viewer to admire her and to judge her. Do we find Bernhard as beautiful as she says she is? We are encouraged to look at Bernhard as a

sex object. She is on display.

She preens for us and she is seductive.

Sex permeates through all her acts.

Between some of them, a platinum blond

stripper comes on. She is

introduced as "What you've all been waiting for..". The audience is given what it wants. The sex is laid on thick, and we lap it up. The star, the personality is measured and defined in terms of her sex appeal. We are invited to judge these women on this level.

While heterosexuality reigns supreme, Bernhard also looks at homosexuality. In one incarnation, she tells of a "straight" man being taken to a gay bar by an old friend, and totally letting loose. This sketch is amazing for she takes on the personality of this man so effortlessly and convincingly. But like the rest of the vignettes, this revelation serves to titillate. There is the overwhelming sense of being a voyeur.

Interspersed throughout the film are clips of a Black woman doing her make-up, hanging around on a street corner, in a lab with a lab

Review



I'm Nothing"

coat on, etc. In one of the clips, she is walking through a shower room as naked women fondle one another. There is a pornographic element to this clip. The women are all posing for the camera, and we are invited to watch. This scene was disturbing in a way that the gay bar sketch was not, because we were not let in on their experience. We could not participate; we could only stare.

The scenes with the Black woman raise many questions. Some are resolved and others are not. Firstly, why a Black woman? I am not clear on this point. The issue of race is introduced without being resolved. Secondly, what is this woman supposed to represent? And what is Sandra's relationship to this woman? This woman embodies the watcher. She is the only one left in the end, and writes "Fuck You Sandra Bernhard" on the table cloth at the nightclub. The she walks out like the rest of the audience. She is the "woman watcher", and she disdains Bernhard's representations of women.

For her final act, Bernhard removes the American flag cape that she is wearing and does a dance number with tassels on her nipples and a g-string. It is a fitting conclusion to her masquerade. She takes it all off. This is what we wanted all along, isn't it? And now we've got it. She serves herself to us. She is strutting her stuff to the beat, and we are forced to watch. But this dance is not sensual. It is not erotic. Bernhard is angry and she lets us know it. She grits her teeth and gives all she's got to an empty night club. After all that she's put out all evening, no one wants what she's got left to offer.

Throughout the film we are presented with images of women that are culturally acceptable. Bernhard is working within the margins of what is tolerated. She strikes a balance between revealing just enough to entice, and not giving it all away. I find it poetic that when she gives the audience what it seems they have been lusting for all along, they vanish. It is as if she has stepped over some kind of barrier, that she has gone too far. She is no longer acceptable.

"Without You I'm Nothing" is a daring film. The issues surrounding sex and North American culture that Bernhard raises are familiar to us all, and yet she succeeds in shocking.

She serves us with a strong dosage of glitz and sex, and it has the power to silence and appall.

Bernhard raises many questions about mainstream

North America. She parodies the women who have been glorified and created by mainstream culture, but she does not take a clear stand against this portrayal. She does, however, leave us with an uneasy feeling. She forces us to look at ourselves through our culture. She has reminded me that we can either accept what Hollywood offers us and therefore help to perpetuate it, or we can resist against it. This film brings up issues that need to be dealt with in the mainstream media. Bernhard begins a dialogue that needs to be picked up and followed by other artists in the arena. For this reason, "Without You I'm Nothing" is an important film, and one worth giving a good look.

by sara morley



Reporting...



Starry-Full



Super Sweeper



Raggedy-Plus



Winged Raggedy



Cluster Lashes



Demi Lashes

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The Permanent Review Committee on the Status of Women has been continuing its mandate to serve Concordia Fine Arts students, teaching faculty and staff these past few months. For your information, here's a brief outline of our activities. Remember - if you would like to participate, we meet every Monday from 4-6 pm in room 243 of the VA building.

In December, we participated with the University Status of Women Committee to commemorate the fourteen women slain December 1989 at L'Ecole Polytechnique. It is essential that we do not bury the memory of this tragedy, but keep on speaking of it in whatever way we can, remembering these women and naming that unspoken fear that shadows their memory. We were pleased with the number and calibre of submissions to the commemorative exhibition held in the VA building during the week of December 6, 1990. Our sincere thanks to all those who participated.

It has been especially heartening to hear women and men speaking together this past year, in efforts to articulate, not only our sense of loss in the deaths of these 14 women, but our sense of empowerment in asserting that they and many other women like them will never be stopped from taking on new and more powerful roles in our society. To celebrate this sense of solidarity among women and the recognition that many men do understand this, we decided to produce t-shirts imprinted with the design illustrated on pages 6 and 7 of this issue. For more information regarding these, please see the ad/box on page 9.

Since the beginning of this year, the committee has undertaken several other projects. It was brought to our attention by two of our members, that Concordia University's Faculty of Fine Arts is lacking in adequate daycare facilities, thus adding unnecessary stress to the many parents attending classes here. A sub-committee has been formed to look into this lack and soon will be circulating a questionnaire for Concordia students, faculty and staff. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out how the child-care needs of students, staff and faculty who are parents or guardians are being met. The information gathered will be used to make recommendations to the appropriate persons as to how child-care facilities at Concordia can be improved. There are many possibilities for improved child-care; for instance, a changing room could be installed in one of the women's and men's washrooms in the VA building, and a room could be made available for parents and children during hours that are not covered by Concordia's Daycare facilities. If you have any ideas yourself, please let us know. The questionnaire will be distributed in the next few weeks.

Another major project your Status of Women Committee has undertaken this year is to produce a handbook or primer for use by students, faculty and staff to assist in dealing with cases of sexism and sexual harassment in the classroom and to aid in the teaching and learning of feminist-related topics. There will be a section dealing with sexism and sexual harassment, including accounts of personal experiences of students; as well as a section on non-sexist language, an extensive annotated bibliography of women-related publications and articles, and a glossary of terms and ideas arising in feminist art and production (especially to help clarify all those semiological and psychoanalytic terms that keep cropping up in feminist readings). We hope to complete production of this publication this spring so that it may be of benefit to all this fall.

Finally, I'd like to point out, in case you hadn't noticed, that all the articles and visuals in this issue are by your fellow students and staff! The reason I point this out, of course, is to make you aware that you, too, can be a Status of Women Newsletter contributor. Just watch out for our calls for submission and send us your writing or your visuals. Sorry, we cannot yet guarantee regular deadlines, but the production has to fit into a few students' busy schedules. Perhaps you'd like to join the Committee in the fall and help out with this and many other urgent projects?

(Don't be shy.)

Karilee Fuglem